

Standard USHC-2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the establishment of the United States as a new nation.

Indicator:

USHC-2.3 Explain development and effectiveness of the Articles of Confederation. (H, P)

Taxonomy Level: 2B Understand/Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In the 4th grade, students compared the ideas in the Articles of Confederation with those in the United States Constitution (4-4.1).

It is essential for students to know:

The lack of a strong central government under the **Articles of Confederation** was a direct result of the experiences under the royal governors and the King and Parliament. Because the Americans were fighting to preserve the rights of their colonial assemblies, they believed sovereignty rested in their state governments and developed a confederation of the 13 states to unite to fight the war. The Continental Congress provided the model for the Articles of Confederation government (the Confederation government) in which each state had one vote in a unicameral legislature and there were no separate executive or judiciary branches.

The **effectiveness** of the new Confederation government was almost immediately called into question when its ratification was delayed by competing state interests. The controversy between large (New York and Virginia) and small states (Maryland) over land claims in the west was effectively resolved with the ceding of state claims to the Confederation government and the creation of the national domain. The national government under the Articles (Confederation government) was effective in dealing with the administration of the national domain. The Confederation government established a method for distribution of this land through the Land Ordinances and the precedent for the creation of new states through the Northwest Ordinances. The Northwest Ordinances also declared slavery illegal in the old Northwest Territory. This was the first effort by the national government to prohibit slavery in the territories. The national government under the Articles was effective in negotiating the Treaty of Paris. The Confederation government also proved effective at the state level as states wrote new constitutions (USHC 2.4) and passed laws that met their needs. In response to Revolutionary War rhetoric, the northern economy and geography; many northern states gradually emancipated their slaves.

The confederation form of government under the Second Continental Congress proved effective during the American Revolution when the states had a common cause. Soon after its ratification in 1781, Americans found that the Confederation under the Articles of Confederation was too weak to meet the needs of the new nation. The Articles of Confederation government was **not effective** diplomatically. The government could not require the British government to live up to the Treaty of Paris by removing British troops stationed at frontier forts. It was not effective in persuading the Spanish to allow Americans access through New Orleans to the sea. The Confederation government could not levy taxes to support an army. They could only *request* funds from the states. States were often *not* in agreement with each other about what issues to support. Therefore, policies concerning Native American nations were not effective as settlers pushed west.

The national government under the Articles was **not effective** economically because they could not persuade the British government to continue to trade with their former colonies. The Confederation government could not resolve conflicts between the states over interstate trade, currency, or boundaries because there was no national judicial branch. Inflation made it difficult for individuals to pay their mortgages and taxes which led to a rebellion in Massachusetts.

Over time the structure of the Confederation government also proved to be **ineffective**. There was no executive to carry out the will of the national government. Many members did not attend Confederation

Congress so it was difficult to pass laws that required the consent of more than a simple majority of the states. Once the war was over, many states refused to support the national government with funds. The Articles of Confederation could not be amended except with the unanimous consent of all of the states. States' disputes over interstate trade and the threat of rebellion led some to call for a stronger national government. Delegates were called to attend a meeting in Philadelphia to amend the Articles in 1787.

It is not essential for students to know:

Although the idea of a democratic republic derived from the Founders readings in ancient history, it is not necessary to compare the new American government to that of ancient Greece and Rome. It is not necessary for students to remember all of the details of the Treaty of Paris or of the Land Ordinance or the Northwest Ordinance such as the division of the land into saleable lots or that the Northwest Ordinances also supported public education by setting aside land for its support. It is not necessary for students to know about failed negotiations with Spain about the right of deposit in New Orleans nor about the Indian wars.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments may require students to **explain** why the Articles of Confederation was designed to be a weak form of central government. The students should be able to **classify** the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles as diplomatic, economic and political and to **classify** actions of the Articles government as evidence of either effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Students should be able to **interpret** maps, graphs and charts and **infer** their value as evidence of the effectiveness of the government under the Articles of Confederation. Students should also be able to **compare** the Articles government with the government under the Constitution (USHC 2.5).